



INITIATIVE ON
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Typologies of women in supply chains to guide gender equity actions: The case of Volcafe in El Paraíso

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1. Gender equity in global value chains and the private sector

1.1. Women in global value chains

The agricultural sector and value chains are characterized by profound gender inequalities. Rural women play an important role in agrifood supply chains, representing between 40 and 50 percent of the agricultural labor force in several regions of the world, yet they often participate under disadvantaged conditions: worse working arrangements and lower wages compared to their male counterparts (FAO, 2023).

Dominant gender norms justify and legitimize gender inequalities. They ascribe greater care burdens to women, leading to time and labor overload (Coffey et al., 2020); they undervalue women's work, normalizing their lack of economic recognition and decision-making power over the income generated when they work on the family farm (Sexsmith, 2017). Finally, these norms limit educational opportunities and access to assets, especially land, for many women. Globally, less than 20% of landowners are women (FAO, 2023), leading to less access to technical and financial inputs and services that could help them improve the performance of their plots, reduce risks and improve their livelihoods (IFC, 2016).

Gender equity is important in itself, and in value chains it plays a fundamental role in ensuring the sustainability of the sector (productive, social, environmental and economic) (Rubin et al., 2009). The majority of studies addressing this issue analyze inequalities between men and women, but inequalities between women also operate in value chains (Oduol, et al., 2017; Friedman et al., 2018). This occurs because gender is not the only factor that defines their experiences (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015; Djoudi, et al., 2016;). Race, ethnicity, class, age, nationality, and place of origin, among others, interact with gender identity causing some women to experience greater exclusion or different forms of marginalization and privilege than others (Colfer et al., 2018). The intersection of sociocultural factors and the roles that different women play in value chains-they may be producers, workers, or "support" in different segments (Twyman, et al., 2022)-impact their experiences within them.

This is why the relevance of understanding the intersection of these factors is increasingly emphasized to identify appropriate and better targeted actions and collaborations (Ihalainen, et al., 2021; Pyburn et al., 2021). However, most of the methodologies used to analyze gender in value chains group women according to the link in which they participate, and the intervention strategies are oriented towards these large groups, assuming a certain homogeneity among them. Examples include the toolbox developed by the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) (2019) and the guide developed by the Global Coffee Platform (GCP) within the framework of the Gender Equity Platform (PGE) (2017).

The intersectional approach posits that different identity categories co-constitute and influence women's experiences, placing them in specific, though not static, social positions. This process is traversed by histories of exclusion (e.g., colonialism, imperialism) in societies with unequal power structures. The social positionality of subjects and its subjective and collective effects are the central axis of intersectional analysis (See McCall, 2005; Nash, J.C. 2008; Puar, J.K. 2012 Hankivsky, 2014).

1.2. Private Sector commitments and challenges

Gender inequalities, combined with other factors, have brought the socioeconomic and environmental conditions of global production and trade under scrutiny. Agri-food companies have shown concern for their reputation and have made commitments to corporate social responsibility, leading many to reassess their practices and sourcing models. These actions can help improve the long-term sustainability of supply chains and strengthen and expand markets (IFC, 2016; IDH, 2019).

Today, creating more equitable chains has become a priority. In some cases, to achieve this, companies are joining Voluntary Sustainability Systems (VSS), which are "market-based mechanisms developed by private actors... and designed to address social and environmental challenges by defining responsible practices and measuring the performance of actors in value chains" (Morgan and Zarembo, 2023, p.7).

Initially, the social and environmental guidelines and standards to which companies adhered were set by third parties, mostly NGOs. Today, several companies, with the advice of NGOs, have developed their own sustainability systems known as "company-led" or "industry-led" standards. In the case of coffee, Starbucks C.A.F.E. Practices and Nespresso AAA are the best known (Grabs, 2018).

Although these standards have traditionally focused on environmental attributes or fair trade, they are increasingly incorporating elements related to gender equity. As an example, the 4C Gender Add-on offers 4C-certified entities with an additional gender certification (see the [4C Gender Certification](#)). Another example is that of The Coffee Quality Institute (CQI) in collaboration with The Global Coffee Platform (GCP), which, through The Partnership for Gender Equity (PGE) developed the [Gender Equity Index](#) for the coffee sector, that companies such as ECOM have used to create a roadmap and action plan in their efforts to improve gender equity in their practices (Wong, 2021).

Once committed, companies face the challenge of translating their commitments into concrete actions that bring about gender equity in their chain. One challenge is to better understand who are the different actors--women, and marginalized groups- that are involved in their supply chain. Currently, the lack of data-and specifically data that would allow companies to know the different types of women involved in the chain-makes makes it difficult to:

- a) Understand the different roles that different types of women play in the chains and the barriers to improving their livelihoods.
- b) Define actions aimed at increasing the benefits they could derive from the chain (including economic empowerment).
- c) Initiate adaptive learning within companies to achieve sustainable supply chains in different socio-cultural contexts and production (or business) chains.

To address this challenge, this study constructed a typology of women involved in the chain based on their role in it, their relationship with the company and their sociocultural position. This analysis makes it possible to identify different groups of women to guide differentiated actions in the same value chain.

2. Women in the coffee chain: The case of Honduras

2.1. Women in the global coffee chain

According to the International Coffee Organization (ICO), between 20% and 30% of coffee farms worldwide are managed by women. The same study indicates that, depending on the region, they contribute about 70% of the labor force in coffee production (2018). Despite the important role that women play in coffee, like other women in the agricultural sector, they face major challenges: a) higher workloads; b) lower incomes and less decision-making power over them and over the management of the plots; c) less access to land and other assets; d) limited access to credit due to the lack of assets to obtain loans; and e) less access to technical assistance and training (ICO, 2018; SCA, 2018). All of this impacts the yields of their farms, the income they receive from their labor, and the well-being of their families and communities, as women invest much of this income in the health, education, nutrition, and food security of their families (Müller and Casabonne, 2020).

2.2. Women in the coffee chain in Honduras

In Honduras, one of the most important coffee producing countries worldwide¹, the participation of women in coffee cultivation is not different from that found in other regions of the world, where a small proportion of female owners is observed, in contrast to their significant participation in coffee production, especially in small farms (ICO, 2018; SCA, 2018). In Honduras, it is estimated that 20% of registered producers are women (a total of 24, 858 producers), with El Paraíso being the municipality with the highest number of female producers registered as such (3,541) (Government, 2020)². At the national level, like the rest of the coffee producers in Honduras, most of them are small and medium producers (94%) (Mogrovejo et al, 2020)³.

These figures represent only those women who have titled land and are registered with IHCAFE. Many women producers are not registered with IHCAFE because, although they have land, the high cost of the legalization process means that most do not have titles to their land. This is a relatively new requirement for registering as a coffee producer. On the other hand, the vast majority of women who participate in the chain do not own land. As a result, conventional data used to quantify women's participation in the coffee chain only shows a small portion of them.

Most of the women involved in the coffee chain are members of producing families. They perform tasks in productive, processing, carework, and harvesting without receiving formal payment for their work and, for the most part, without being recognized as part of the chain. Those employed in the chain are over-represented in the least profitable segments, and generate less income, if any (Lara, 2009, Mogrovejo et al., 2020; Accerenzi and Duke, 2023; FAO, 2023). For example, Ceballos-Sierra estimates that 50% of those involved in coffee harvesting, a temporary and low-paid job, are women (2022). They participate in other segments that are considered better paid, although in smaller proportions. In 2018, only 12% of the intermediaries registered with AHICAFE were women (Alvarez, 2018)⁴. Álvarez also notes that women represent only 23% of the employees hired by exporting companies in the sector (2018). While coffee processing and roasting is handled by large companies, there are some small artisanal roasters run by women (AMUCAFEH, 2019), and some women export their coffee directly, mostly through cooperatives (Swisscontact, 2021).

In recent years, the high number of male producers who have migrated has led to more women managing family farms, although they are still formally registered in the name of their husbands/fathers/brothers. Ríos et al. indicate that in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, one-third of the farms surveyed for their study were headed by women (2022), raising questions about the specific barriers they face given their new role and the type of technical assistance they require.

¹ The first coffee producer in Central America, the third in Latin America and the seventh worldwide (IHCAFE, 2023).

² El Paraíso is followed by: Comayagua (3,369) and Santa Barbara (3,102).

³ According to Mogrovejo et al, 6% are large producers (2020).

⁴ Unfortunately, none of the studies consulted describe who are the women involved in this activity.

2.3. The challenges faced by Honduran women in the coffee chain

Honduran women involved in the coffee chain face similar challenges to those faced by other women in the same chain worldwide:

1. Less access to land and other assets and less access to credit and financial assistance (Government of Honduras, 2020; Lara, 2009; Ruben et al., 2018).
2. Less decision-making power over coffee-generated income, farm management, and credit decisions (Dietz et al., 2018; Rubio-Jovel, 2021).
3. Increased workload, as dominant gender norms assign them all domestic and care responsibilities to them, to which agricultural activities are added (Rubio-Jovel, 2021).
4. Limited mobility, which affects their participation in women's groups, educational programs and technical training offered by cooperatives or other organizations (Rubio-Jovel, 2021; Lara, 2009).
5. Less technical assistance because they are not perceived as producers and/or assistance that ignores their specific needs (Pérez Hernández, et al., 2018; Government, 2020; Cui, 2022).

In Honduras, there are also differences between women participating in the chain. Rubio-Jovel observed a correlation between the size of women's property and their economic empowerment: those with more land were more economically empowered (2021). They also had greater access to credit, technical services and training (Accerenzi and Duke, 2023; Pérez Hernández, 2018). Age and ethnicity also influence women's experiences in the chain. In the Lenca areas of Honduras, Lenca women who participate in coffee activities earn about half of what Lenca men earn, and young Lenca women earn even less than adult Lenca women (about 20% less) (Pérez Hernández et al., 2018).

Although women's participation in the chain has become more visible in the last decade, with more women participating in coffee cooperatives and organizations (Mogrovejo et al., 2020)-the challenges they continue to face led the Honduran government to approve in 2021 the Gender Policy for the Coffee Subsector, becoming the first country in the world to approve such a policy (Rikolto, 2021)⁵. This is considered an essential step to achieve the social sustainability of coffee, which is threatened by - among other things - gender inequality and low participation of new generations. The basic premise of the policy is that strengthening women's participation in coffee institutions and their access to services and resources will contribute to achieving higher production yields, better incomes and greater leadership, which in turn will lead to their inclusion in the chain. As the policy itself indicates, achieving this goal will require an alliance of different actors.

The conditions of women in the coffee chain and the diversity among them is a relevant issue for companies and other actors in the sector, but questions arise: How to include in the chain analysis the socio-cultural factors that influence the different and often unequal ways in which women participate in the chain? Which factors should be prioritized in the design of actions? How to adapt the proposed solutions according to the prioritized factors? The study described here proposes a working methodology to answer these questions. The aim is to help guide differentiated actions that companies and other actors undertake to build inclusive, equitable and sustainable chains.

⁵ The policy was designed by the National Coffee Council (CONACAFE), Solidaridad and Rikolto (the latter two are international NGOs).

3. Description of the methodology

The objective of the study was to identify who are the women who participate in the Volcafe chain in the department of El Paraíso and to analyze whether there are women among them who, due to their social positionality, have different limitations and benefits than others, in order to guide the company's investments in gender equity in this area. We identified and characterized the different groups of women through the construction of a typology of women participating in the company's chain, using an intersectional approach.

The study sought to answer 3 specific questions:

1. Who are the different women involved in the company's chain?
2. Which practices in the company's chain generate benefits and which practices limit the benefits that different women obtain from the chain?
3. How can companies create enabling conditions that enhance the benefits for different groups of women in their supply chain?

3.1. Typologies in agricultural research for development and the intersectional approach

Typologies are a common analytical tool for organizing information. Constructing typologies of subjects consists of grouping them into different types based on common characteristics and differences that allow identifying patterns in their experiences (Stapley et al., 2022). Relevant dimensions, derived from the conceptual models used and the research objectives, are used to create the types. From an analytical point of view, typologies can facilitate theoretical comparisons, and from an empirical point of view, they can help to develop tailored interventions. However, it is always important to keep in mind that typologies are dynamic abstractions, i.e., they are generalizations that are not fixed in time or space.

The use of typologies in agricultural research is not new. For example, farmer typologies have been used to suggest better adaptation of extension services or to define climate adaptation programs (e.g., Singh, et. Al., 2022; Musafiri, et. Al., 2020; Shukla, et. Al., 2019). However, these typologies have prioritized biophysical characteristics of farms or general household characteristics to create groupings, in many cases ignoring the socio-cultural characteristics of actors and how these impact rural inequalities (Nguyen-Perperidis, 2023).

Some studies analyzing women's participation in value chains have also used qualitative typologies to:

- Understand women's heterogeneity (Oduol, et al., 2017);
- Highlight their view of their own lives (Farnworth et al., 2021);
- Identify patterns in the information obtained that facilitate the design of interventions tailored to the particularities of different groups of women (Oduol, et al, 2017; Friedman et al., 2018).

These studies generally focus on women producers and use dimensions such as head of household and/or land tenure to create typologies, leaving out women who work in agriculture but are not considered producers, women in other links in the chain, and sociocultural factors that affect women's experiences. The intersectional approach explores how race, ethnicity, age, place of origin, class (among others) interact with gender to place women in different social positions. These sociocultural factors and women's role in the chain affect the benefits they obtain and the challenges they face.

3.2. Characteristics of the methodology

The methodology is:

- **Qualitative**, using an ethnographic approach that provides contextual information and allows us to delve into the diversity of women's experiences.
- **Participatory**, involving the company and the women participating in the study in the construction of the typologies throughout the process.
- **Site-specific**, understanding the local dynamics of a company's chain to inform relevant site-specific actions aimed at different groups of women. In other words, the results of this study do not represent the entire universe of women in the region, but rather the experiences of those linked to a specific company (Volcafe). Nor does it represent the Volcafe coffee chain in Honduras, since both the dynamics of the chain and the women in it vary from zone to zone.
- **Intersectional**, by using sociocultural factors as one of the dimensions to construct the typology of women and analyze the information collected.

- **Focused on women's empowerment**, since it seeks to determine the roles and proportions of women's participation in the chain and their capacity to make strategic decisions for their lives (Kabeer, 1999)⁶. For this reason, the exploration of typologies was organized around some of the main axes of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index at Project Level for Market Inclusion (Pro-WEAI-MI) (Malapit et al., 2023). (see Figure 2)

The methodology followed 5 steps, based on the conventional steps used to construct typologies (see Kluge, 2000; Laporte et al., 2008; Stapley et al., 2022).

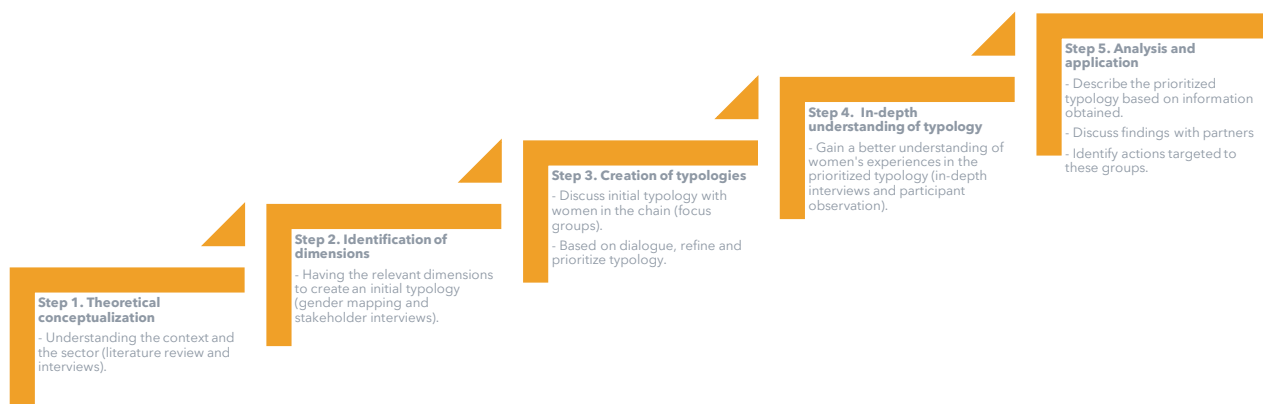


Figure 1 Methodological steps for constructing typologies of women in value chains with an **intersectional** focus

Step 1 Theoretical Conceptualization

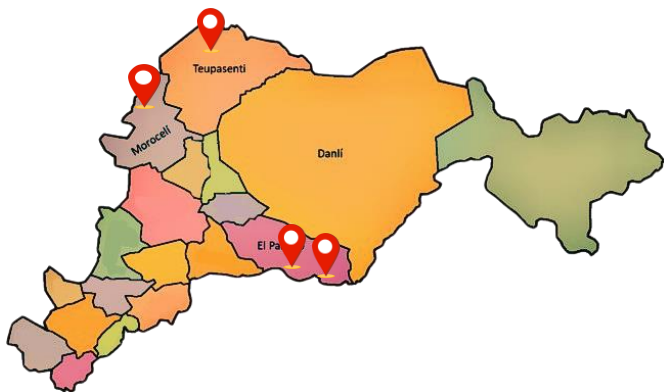
The objective was to understand the geographical and sociocultural context of the area and the specific chain to be analyzed. To achieve this, we reviewed the academic and grey literature on the coffee chain at the national level and in the area of interest. We also talked with the research partners: the focal points of the national team of the international organization Swisscontact and the company Volcafe (Molinos de Honduras) to understand the chain in the area and discuss the research protocol. This step allowed us to have a first mapping of the chain in the area in order to prioritize the sites to visit to learn about the diversity of women participating in it. The literature review and dialogue with partners allowed us to identify sociocultural factors that influence the experiences of chain participants and that could be relevant in the construction of typologies. Based on the theoretical conceptualization of the chain and conversations with the national technical team, an outline map of the chain in El Paraíso was drawn and used as a starting point for the focus groups conducted in step 2. The process was carried out between late September and early October 2023.

Step 2: Identification of dimensions of interest

The objective was to understand the chain in the area and the women who participate in it at the community level in order to identify relevant dimensions that would allow us to develop a first typology of women in the Volcafe chain in El Paraíso. We used two tools. The first was participatory mapping of the chain in focus groups and the second was semi-structured interviews with key informants, mainly women, in the area. At this stage, the research team consisted of two anthropologists and was conducted between October 16 and 22, 2023.

Definition of the focus groups: The first focus group was conducted with Volcafe technicians in El Paraíso (15 men and 1 woman). It was important to start with them in order to socialize the objectives of the research, to understand in more detail how the company's chain operates in the department, to have a first description of the different women who participate in it and the variations that exist according to the zone (in terms of the chain and the participation of women). On the basis of this dialogue, we jointly defined the criteria for the selection of the zones in which we carried out the other focus groups (see Table 1).

⁶ Kabeer identifies 3 key dimensions of empowerment: i) Resources (material, human and social resources that enable decision making); ii) Agency, understood as the capacity to define one's own and collective objectives and act accordingly; and iii) Outcomes, referring to results in well-being. The three dimensions are interconnected (Meinzen-Dick, et al., 2019; Equipo Género, 2023).



Organization of the focus groups and participants: The first focus group was organized exclusively with women temporarily employed in the company's nurseries in the city of El Paraíso. In the other 3 focus groups, women and men members of the rural saving and loan associations, known locally as *Cajas Rurales*⁷, in the prioritized area were invited. The *cajas rurales* are the groups through which Volcafe channels its technical and financial assistance programs and are made up of producers who supply coffee to the company. We asked the technical team to invite not only the producers, but also the women in their families. The participants in the focus groups belonged to different rural *cajas rurales* and to different communities within the areas prioritized by the study.

Table 1 Focus groups with whom the participatory chain mapping was carried out

Zone	Inclusion criteria	Number of participants		
		Women	Men	Total
Volcafe technicians, El Paraíso	Knowledge of the company's chain in the area.	1	15	16
El Paraíso, El Paraíso	Workers in the company's nursery	6	0	6
El Chile, Morocelí	Important supply of coffee to the company	11	4	15
Las Delicias, El Paraíso.	Strong women's leadership.	7	8	15
El Encino/La Union, Teupasenti	Strong male migration	13	17	30
Total		38	44	82

Through semi-structured interviews with key informants, particularly women who participate in the chain, we explored the different women who participate in the chain, the roles they play, and the opportunities and challenges they face in general. We prioritized interviews with women producers who were knowledgeable about the region, two of whom were also technicians in rural programs in the department and had a broader territorial perspective. We conducted 2 interviews with technicians (a group interview with 2 technicians and 1 individual interview with a woman) and 3 individual interviews with women producers: 2 from the Las Delicias area and 1 from El Chile.

The analysis of the information gathered in the focus groups and interviews allowed us to identify three dimensions to build the initial typology combining the number of women and the level of marginalization:

⁷ They are also known as community based rural financial institutions.

1. Women's relationship with the company in terms of the sale of services or the supply of products (direct or indirect);
2. The role of women in the company's chain (nursery workers, women producers selling coffee to Volcafe, women who are members of family's selling coffee to Volcafé, harvester employed by families that sell coffee to Volcafé. Here we also added the relationship of the women producers to the national coffee institution: if they are registered with them or not;
3. Sociocultural factors that determine the social positionality of women in the company chain in the area. We identified: marital status, place of origin, migration of the partner.

We recognize that the above dimensions are interdependent: the social positionality of women affects the role they play in the chain, which in turn affects the type of relationship they have with the company. However, it was useful to separate them in order to explore differences between groups of women⁸.



Figure 2 Initial typology

Step 3 Creation of typologies

The objective was to construct an initial typology using the prioritized dimensions and to present it to the women participating in the chain in order to refine the typology, based on this dialogue and to prioritize the types of women to be studied in depth. It was carried out by a team of 1 anthropologist and 2 anthropology students between October 30 and November 12, 2023 through focus groups at the community level.

Based on the prioritized dimensions, we initially identified 6 groups of women in the chain (see Figure 2). With this information, we organized focus groups to discuss the typology found. Women directly or indirectly involved in the company's chain were invited to the second round of focus groups. The groups were held in the areas where the value chain participatory mappings were carried out in order to resume the initial contact established with them.

Organization of focus groups and participants: We asked Volcafe's technical team to contact the women who work in the company's nursery in order to conduct a focus group with them. In the other zones, we planned to conduct focus groups in two communities for each zone visited (6 in total). The communities were chosen based on their proximity to each other. However, due to weather conditions, we were only able to visit 4 communities. In the end, we conducted 5 focus groups: one in the city of El Paraíso (with the women working in the nursery) and the others in the communities of Buena Vista and Las Limas (Las Delicias), Pueblo Nuevo (Morocelí) and La Unión (Teupacenti). In total, 60 women participated.

In two communities, the community focus groups were organized with the support of the leaders of the caja rural or producer group that we met during the participatory mapping. We communicated directly with them and asked them to invite young and adult women involved in the company's coffee chain in the area (not limited to being direct members of the caja rural /producer group⁹ or having a specific role in the chain). In the other two communities, due to the unstable cell phone signal, we asked Volcafe technicians in the community to help organize the focus groups. We asked them to invite between 6 and 15 women. In most of the communities, women who directly or indirectly supply coffee to the company, although there were cases where women who do not supply coffee to the company but want to do so also participated. In two communities the leaders and technicians invited mainly women producers who were members of cajas rurales; this bias was offset by the broad invitations made in the other two communities.

⁸ For a more extensive discussion of the methodology, see Elias et al., 2023.

⁹ They could be part of the family of producers affiliated to the Cajas Rurales/producer groups.

Questions that guided the focus groups: In the focus groups, we presented the initial typology and discussed each type with the participants. We asked them: Do you see yourself in any of them or should we create other groups? Are there women in the community who are not represented in these groups? Who are they? We delved deeper into the characteristics of the groups they identified and the benefits and challenges they felt the women in these groups faced in the company's value chain. Finally, we superficially explored some of the major themes related to women's empowerment ([PRO-WEAI-MI](#)), see Figure 3.)



Figure 3 Themes explored

Selection of typologies to explore. The women identified differences among themselves related to their role in the coffee chain and their relationship with the company, for example, the difference between women producers and women members of producing families or women working for the company in its nursery. However, for the women participants, the sociocultural variables initially identified, such as age, marital status or place of origin, did not make a significant difference in their experiences with the company. For this reason, we decided to deepen the understanding of 4 types of women, defined on the basis of their relationship with the company (direct or indirect) and their role in the chain, leaving aside sociocultural factors, although without losing sight of them during the research and analysis process. The types or groups were:

1. Women with a direct relationship with the company as employees (priority was given to the largest group: women working in nurseries);
2. Women with a direct relationship to the company as coffee suppliers (producers).
3. Women with an indirect relationship to the company as members of families that supply coffee to the company. This is the group that includes most of the women who participate in the Volcafe chain.
4. Women with an indirect relationship with the company who are employed by suppliers to harvest coffee.

Although type 4 has a significant numerical weight and an important role, they were not included in the final typification because we did not meet them in the field and were unable to interview them or observe their work. Nevertheless, it is a type that should be considered in this chain because of its numerical weight and level of marginalization.

During the focus groups, we identified women who had recently moved from group 3 (members of a provider's families) to group 2 (providers) due to the migration of family members (parents/siblings/husband). We decided to prioritize some of these women in the interviews and participant observation.

Step 4. Understanding the selected types.

The objective was to explore in depth the experiences of women in the three prioritized types of women. We did this using two ethnographic tools: in-depth interviews and participant observation in homes and farms. The interviews and participant observation were conducted by the same team (1 anthropologist and 2 anthropology students). We spent two and a half days in each community. The focus groups, in-depth interviews, and participant observation were conducted in a single field visit between October 30 and November 13, 2023.

Definition of number of participants: We interviewed 3 women hired seasonally by the company and living in the city of El Paraíso. In the rural communities, we planned to interview 3 women from producing families and 3 women producers in each community (6 women per community). However, in some communities more women producers were interviewed since they were overrepresented in the focus group. In total we conducted 27 in-depth interviews and 5 participant observations (see Figure 3).

Identification of participants: We first conducted the focus groups (from step 3) and then approached women who belonged to the prioritized groups and who showed openness to talk during the focus group. We also identified women who had taken on

new roles on the farm due to the migration of their family members. We asked them if we could visit them and conduct an in-depth interview. The fact that we had met them in the focus group facilitated the dialogue and their openness in the subsequent interview. The interviews were long conversations guided by the themes listed in Figure 3, we also looked at how they benefited from working with the company and the challenges they faced.

Table 2 Study informants

Activities	Number	Informants		
		Women	Men	Total
Focus Groups	10	98	44	142
Exploratory interviews	6	4	2	6
In-depth interviews	27	27	0	27
		3 workers		
		15 production companies		
		9 women in producing families		
Total	43	129	46	175

Step 5 Analysis and application

The objective was to analyze the information gathered in the in-depth interviews and participant observation and, based on this, to prepare a description of each of the prioritized types of women and their experiences in the chain. To achieve this, we prepared a matrix of analysis by type of woman. The matrix was organized on the basis of the main themes explored in the in-depth interviews (Figure 3), as well as the benefits and challenges they identified. This process allowed us to observe similarities as well as differences between types.

We also explored diversity within the types and found that despite the apparent homogeneity of the population, there is heterogeneity within the groups. For example, in the in-depth interviews, we observed that within the category of women suppliers there are two groups with distinct experiences and needs: the first group are women suppliers who manage the production of their coffee and the sale to the company. The second group are women suppliers who manage the income that results from coffee sales but do not manage its production or participate in the sale process. They delegate these activities to other members of their family (mostly men, but also women). These differences led us to divide a type into two.

The next two chapters describe the typology and programmatic recommendations that the company can make, on its own or in alliance with other actors in the area, to improve the benefits and address the challenges faced by different women in their chain. At the end of the study, the findings and recommendations were shared with the study's partners for feedback.

4. Findings

The findings of the study relate to women's participation in the chain, the types of women, and their experiences. We begin with a description of the Volcafe chain in the department of El Paraíso and the findings on the participation of women and men in the chain. We then present a description of the prioritized typologies of women and their experiences in the chain, including the benefits and constraints they encounter in it.

4.1. The Volcafe chain in El Paraíso

Volcafe's value chain in El Paraíso is vertically integrated, meaning that Volcafe not only purchases coffee, but also provides a range of services to its suppliers. As shown in Figure 4, in El Paraíso, Volcafe buys 97% of its coffee from small producers organized in *cajas rurales* or in producer groups. The remaining 3% is purchased from local intermediaries.

Throughout the year, the company provides financing in the form of cash or input loans at rates below those of the local market. Producers consider these loans to be "fair interest" loans, as opposed to those offered by microfinance companies and intermediaries in the area. Volcafe also provides technical assistance by visiting producers, sharing their farming approach (Volcafe way), and distributing coffee seedlings and timber trees planted in the company's nursery in El Paraíso. Although in the areas visited, producers also receive inputs, credit and technical assistance from other entities such as Solidaridad, FUNDER, Technoserve, Brigadas Globales, Swisscontact, Kolping Foundation and second-degree cooperatives.

During the harvest season, Volcafe collects the coffee from its suppliers at their farms or at a central location and takes it to its dry mill in El Paraíso, thus providing a transportation service. Finally, the company buys the coffee. The producers travel to El Paraíso to be present at the weighing and to receive the check for their coffee.

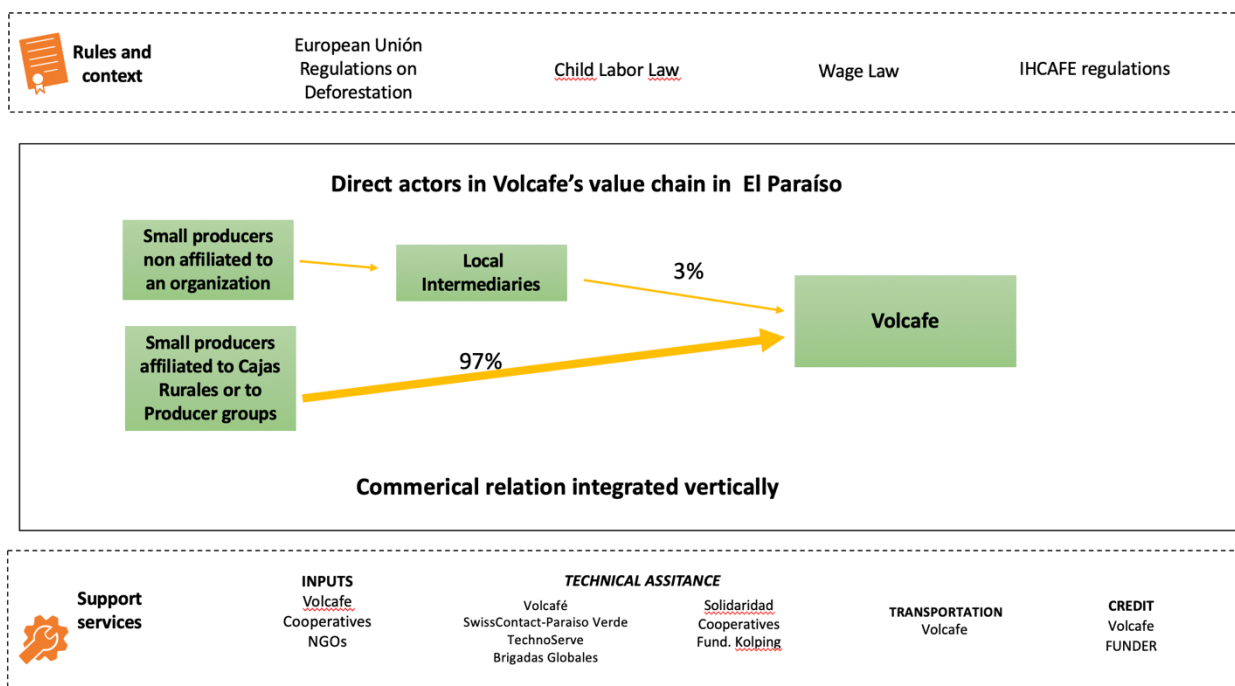


Figure 4 Map of Volcafe's chain in El Paraíso

In terms of the benefits they obtain from their relationship with Volcafe, suppliers in the focus groups emphasized that commercial transactions with the company are transparent (with unadulterated weights and using weighing per pound as stipulated by law) and that the company offers a better price than local intermediaries. One producer told us: "We do better because we work with them with fertilizer or cash credits, and the price is better, the weighing is better, and they come to bring it [the coffee] to the village with the truck, we don't worry about it. Practically we just pick up the check" (HDSGLU4D1_9).

Regarding the rules and the regulatory environment, Volcafe's technicians are very familiar with most of the national norms and laws related to coffee, emphasizing in particular the new European Union regulation on Deforestation and the impact it could

have on El Paraiso producers. The producers, on the other hand, are mainly familiar with the IHCAFE regulations. Both technicians and producers are unaware of the coffee sector's gender policy.

4.2. Women's participation in the Volcafe chain

Figure 5 summarizes the findings regarding the activities carried out by men and women in the Volcafe coffee chain in El Paraiso. As can be seen, the women who participate in the Volcafe chain in El Paraiso are present in almost all production and post-production activities and are involved in the artisanal processing of coffee for family consumption. They play an important role in planting seedlings, harvesting, administrative tasks (preparing food for harvesters and preparing the payroll), and washing and drying the coffee.

The information presented here is based on the perceptions of the focus groups participants (not on quantitative data). The height of the column corresponds to the number of different tasks identified and not to the number of people involved. For example, more people are involved in harvesting, but in nursery and planting there are more tasks, thus the size of the link's column.

During the focus groups, women self-identified themselves as participating in more activities than those identified by men as women's tasks, for example, some women indicated that they selected seeds and used the machine to pulp coffee. One focus group discussed women's increasing participation in activities that they "traditionally" did not perform due to the scarcity of labor in the area caused by male migration. One farmer said:

"In x community I see quite a few women...those who fill [bags] are women, those who sow are women, those who fertilize are women, those who clean are women...The only other thing (sic) you do as a man there is to pull up the soil" (HDFSBV2B).

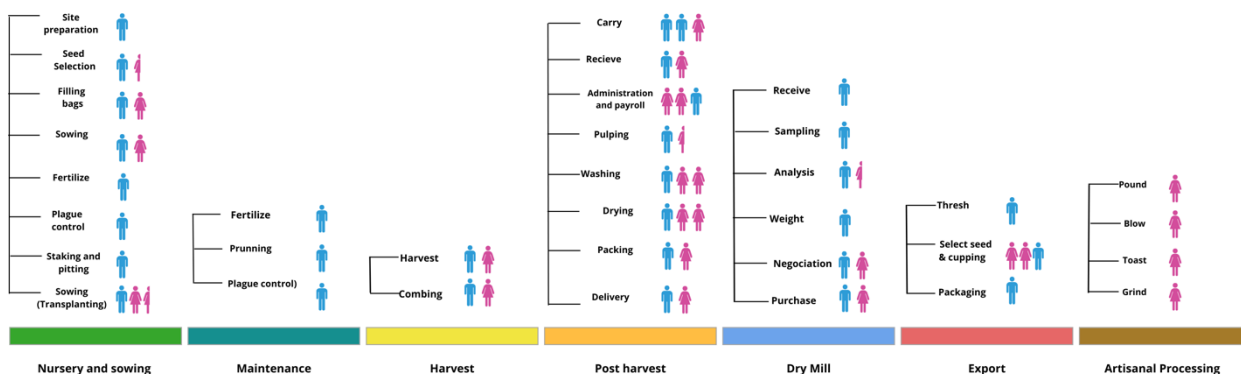


Figure 5 Women's and men's participation in the Volcafe chain in El Paraiso (based on perceptions)

During the exercise we also observed the weight of gender norms, which placed women in activities that required more "skill" or that were less "heavy" and, in some cases, close to their home (such as washing and drying coffee), while men performed "heavy" activities that required strength. However, in the in-depth interviews, many women told us that they perform heavy tasks (carrying cut coffee on slopes) or "dangerous tasks" such as fumigation. In some focus groups, both men and women pointed out that there are producers who prefer to work with female harvesters because they are more careful when cutting coffee and do not damage the plant.

In other cases, the complementarity of roles was emphasized: "they sift the soil, we prepare the seedbeds... when it is time to plant, they dig the hole and we sow" (HDFSCV2B). Although there is complementarity between men and women in the distribution of roles, as we will see in the following subsection, the same does not occur in the distribution of the benefits derived from this activity.

The mapping of the chain revealed gaps in knowledge about how the chain and its actors work. With the exception of the women producers who sell their coffee to the company, the rest of the women do not know what happens to the coffee beyond their communities. The producers and some of the women producers know what happens in the Dry mill link. For example,

they described who weighs the coffee at the company's offices in El Paraíso and, in some cases, how the coffee is dried. However, they do not know what happens beyond El Paraíso. Only some of Volcafe's technicians were aware of the activities that take place in San Pedro Sula and the regions to which the coffee is exported.

4.3. Typologies of women in the Volcafe chain in El Paraíso

Based on the analysis of the information gathered, we defined four types of women relevant to the company's actions. The dimensions used for the typification were: the number of women, the nature of their relationship with the company and their role in the chain. The following four typologies are described in more details below¹⁰ :

- a) **Women who work for the company in its nursery.**
- b) **Women suppliers to the company who manage the coffee income but not the farm,** delegating the management and sale of coffee to family members.
- c) **Women suppliers to the company who manage their farm.**
- d) **Women in families who supply coffee to the company.**

It should be noted that in both the focus groups and the in-depth interviews, we found great homogeneity in the participants' experiences. However, we observed that the interaction between: a) subjective experiences (life histories and personal characteristics); b) age; and c) socioeconomic status influenced their social positioning and the interpretation and management of gender norms. As will be seen below, the above factors influence the role they have or assume in the chain, the decisions they consider they can make about coffee, and the place it occupies in their personal and family lives.

1. Women who work for the company in its nursery ¹¹

For them, coffee is fundamental to their survival. They do own no assets, and provide services to the company. They started working with Volcafe in 2023 (the year we interviewed them). Between March and May, they work on the company's nursery on a daily basis (from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.), with a salary of 271 lempiras per day, much higher than the 170 lempiras they earn elsewhere¹². Their contract is temporary. They are also hired on an ad hoc basis before the planting season (July) to clean and fertilize the seedbeds. They are all satisfied with their work in the company and define it as one of the best jobs they have ever had because of the good treatment they receive and the salary.

Who are they? They are women between 30 and 60 years old. They all live in the city of El Paraíso. The older women were born in rural areas of other municipalities and their families migrated to the city when they were young. The adults have no schooling and the young women have completed primary school. Most have a partner and all have children. Those with younger children have the support of a relative to care for them while they work.

Assets, sources of income, and decision-making. Neither they nor their partners own land. Half own their own homes and the other half rent or live with their mothers/fathers. Since they were very young, their lives have been linked to coffee as harvesters (corteras). Currently they have several sources of income, not only in the agricultural sector. In addition to working in Volcafe's nursery, they also work in the nurseries of large farmers, are harvesters in farms near the city, wash clothes and occasionally work per day in the homes of families in the city. Some depend on their partners' income during the low coffee season while they care for their children; however, most seek employment during the rest of the year because one income does not cover basic family expenses. When they have an emergency and need money, they turn to lending houses and buy food on credit from local food stores, which they pay for every 15 days. They make decisions about the money they earn and invest it mainly in food and their children's studies.

Community roles and migration: They are not involved in community organizations although they are involved in religious activities. Only one of the women interviewed reported having a family member who had migrated.

Desires for the future. Regarding the future, those who have a house want to improve it and those who have young children want to help them get ahead.

Benefits of working at Volcafe: All point to fair wages and good treatment as the biggest benefit of working at Volcafe. When they speak of good treatment, they refer to having half an hour for lunch, being able to use the company's bathrooms (clean, with soap and paper), and being treated well by the company's workers (being greeted, being asked how they are doing).

¹⁰ We believe that female "corteras" (harvesters) represent another type of woman relevant to the company, but we were not able to explore it.

¹¹ In total, the company hires 6 women to work in its nursery.

¹² They receive the minimum wage in the agricultural sector established by law.

Challenges of working at Volcafe: They point out that the biggest challenge is the temporary nature of the employment. They recognize that this is the reality of working with coffee, but they would like to be able to work for the company longer.

2. Women suppliers to the company who manage the coffee income but not the farm.

They are women who own properties, most of them small in size, who do not manage their farms, although they do make decisions about the income generated by the sale of coffee. They are betting on coffee as a family business. Although they know about coffee and have attended training courses, they leave their production to others because they are older, because they consider it to be the responsibility of men, or because they have other things that interest them or occupy them more.

Who are they? They are between 40 and 70 years old with older children and partners (the older women are widows). With the exception of the older women, all have basic formal education (primary school). Their relatives (husbands, sons, daughters, parents) manage the farm and sell the coffee. They define themselves first as housewives and then as producers. Most of them have older children and take care of their grandchildren or they take care of their daughters.

Assets, sources of income and decision-making. They own land either through inheritance, widowhood or, to a lesser extent, because their husbands gave them a plot of land with coffee. With the exception of widows, most do not own large plots of land (usually 1 manzana or less). When asked about the wet mill and dryers, unlike the women producers who manage the farm, they stated that these assets belong to the family (not to them). The older women are registered with IHCAFE, the younger women are not registered due to recent changes in the registration process and the requirement for "formal land titles". This explains why some sell coffee in the name of their husbands, brothers, or parents who are registered.

The family's main source of income is agricultural, depending primarily on coffee and to a lesser extent on the sale of bananas, plantains and citrus from the coffee plantation. They make decisions about their time, household activities and income (from coffee). They invest it in home improvements and the education of their children or grandchildren. Most do not make decisions about the farm, about loans to work their plots, or about selling the coffee produced on those plots. It is their relatives (husbands, sons, daughters, fathers) who make these decisions and who hire labor on the farms or are directly involved in agricultural work. They contribute with tasks that can be done in or near the home (washing and drying coffee, preparing food for the farmhands, taking care of their grandchildren). That said, it is important to note that many expressed that they did not feel undervalued for not being more actively involved in the management of the farm. Some feel that this is the proper division of responsibilities in the household, others feel that they are older and need support.

They attend trainings when invited and take the initiative to apply some of what they learned when the topics interest them. They recognize the importance of the company for the wellbeing of their families and support their relatives in the processes they undertake related to coffee. They know how Volcafe works in the area, as many are members of the *cajas rurales*, and they know the mechanisms for applying for loans. In some cases, although the loan is in their name, in many cases the relationship with the company is managed by their relatives.

Community roles and migration. They participate in productive and communal organizations. Although they do not always have leadership roles, their voice and participation are key to initiating processes in these groups. In the case of older women, many of their sons and daughters have migrated and generally one of them (in many cases a woman) assumes the role of taking care of them and the farm.

Future desires Her future focus is on her family and improving their home. The coffee farm is seen as a source of income to achieve her goals, not as an end in itself.

Benefits of working with Volcafe: Contrary to the long list of benefits mentioned by the women producers who manage their farms, they limited themselves to mentioning the transparency of the commercial relationship (unadulterated weights, using measurements based on the law), prices, delivery of assets and transportation to the dry mill as the benefits of working with Volcafe.

Challenges of working with Volcafe: They pointed out two issues: the need for more information about the programs that the company undertakes with other organizations and the negative impact when the company does not differentiate the price of coffee (pays the same for coffee without taking into account that it is "well polished"). It should be noted that they do not have more information because they do not always attend the meetings organized by the company.

General challenges: Many of them, particularly those who have recently inherited land, are **not registered with IHCAFE** (due to changes in regulations). This means that they depend on their husbands or other family members who are registered in order to sell coffee. Although they are aware of some of the issues related to coffee (particularly during production and post-harvest), they show **little clarity about the regulations** that affect them, especially those related to IHCAFE. Although they recognize that Volcafe promotes training and exchange, they participate little in the training processes, in some cases because they are older, because their husbands do not always agree that they should travel alone or are absent, or because they are not interested in these topics. A woman producer told us:

"And I tell them: 'well, I like to go to this [training]' ... because I like to learn. But there are women who don't. 'You go,' they tell their husbands, 'you go'" (HDSGLU3C).

3. Women suppliers of the company who manage their farm

These are women property owners who manage their farms and supply coffee to the company. Most are registered with IHCAFE and define themselves as producers and housewives. They see their farm as a "business" and as a source of livelihood. They are proud of what they do and share their knowledge with others. They value the relationship with Volcafe and sell a good portion of their production to the company. On many occasions, they convince others to adopt the recommendations of the company's technicians.

Who are they? They are between 35 and 50 years old. Their marital status varies (some are married or living together, some are single and some are separated). Most were born in the community where they live. They have a formal secondary education (they have a technical high school diploma or a university degree). They have support (family network) that allows them to balance domestic and agricultural activities and the vast majority do not have young children.

Assets, sources of income and decision making. They own land that they have inherited. Some have also bought land. They own wet mills and dryers. They have non-agricultural sources of income (jobs in the area) or agricultural sources of income (livestock) that allow them to cope with the months of low coffee production, have financial independence and resources to invest in their farms. They have control over their assets, their time and their income, and they decide, alone or together with other family members, how to manage the farm (use of fertilizer and manure, areas to be cultivated, investments to be made, hiring of labor), how to apply for credit and how to sell coffee. All of them keep budgets of their expenses and some have elaborated investment plans. They have access to credit through *cajas rurales* or other institutions and know the mechanisms very well. They employ workers whom they directly supervise and they themselves work throughout the production process.

They are willing and able to participate in coffee training processes and implement what they learn on their farms. However, some of them acknowledge they have had to challenge gender norms to do so, and that their journey has not been easy. One told us in a focus group:

"I have become independent 'I am like a mule without an owner' [laughter from all] ...because one has problems with wanting to learn more. It is not easy...They (husbands) are always around, angry" (HDFS BV3C).

Community roles and migration. They participate in rural and communal organizations (*Patronatos*, school committees). They usually have leadership roles in them. All of them have a family member who has migrated: mainly brothers, sisters and children, but they do not depend on remittances to manage their farms. Some of them have taken over the management of the farms of their migrant relatives.

Future desires. They have clear goals related to coffee and plans on how to achieve them. Future aspirations include producing specialty coffee, increasing their cultivated area and yield of the farm, trying new techniques to improve the price of their coffee (organic), and selling to other markets.

Benefits of working with Volcafe. They emphasized as positive: a) the transparency of the commercial relationship (unadulterated weights, use of measurements based on the law); b) offering a better price than intermediaries in the area; c) providing assets (timber in all the communities and dryers and sieves in some); d) and being responsible for transporting the coffee to the dry mill. Unlike other women, they also emphasized that the company gives them what they call "fair credit" with an interest rate of 1.5%, as opposed to the 5% charged by intermediaries. They also emphasized that they provide inputs at low prices and carry out exchanges and training within Honduras, which has allowed them to learn about the experiences of other producers and people from other parts of the world. For many of them these exchanges have been important to learn about coffee, indicating that they have applied some of the lessons learned in their coffee plantations. They also emphasize the importance of the technical assistance they receive from Volcafe. This assistance has allowed them to improve the yields of their farms and reduce costs, particularly in a context of scarce and expensive labor. Finally, these women point to the good treatment they receive from the company's team: they say they feel listened to and supported by them.

Challenges of working with Volcafe: The current funding model is a challenge for them. Although the interest rate is fair, the model used by the company provides the inputs first and then the money, but they need the money first to pay people to apply the inputs (they do not always have family members who can do this). Some point out that producers with less knowledge of financial planning have difficulty in correctly calculating the amount of credit they should request from the company.

The second challenge is to have more information on: a) the cupping process: what are the parameters used by the company and how does it differ from those used by other entities; b) the certification with which the company works: what is it called, what are its requirements, what benefits does it offer compared to other certification processes; c) the markets: where does our coffee go? Also mentioned was the lack of adequate places to wait for decisions related to cupping (shady places, chairs, access to water).

*General challenges they face: **Lack of support to capitalize rural banks.*** Some believe that rural banks can help them achieve financial autonomy and not just be a vehicle for receiving credit from the company. However, they are not able to increase their capital through membership fees alone and point out the importance of financial support to capitalize the *cajas rurales*.

4. Women in families who supply the company.

They are wives, sisters, daughters, daughters-in-law of coffee suppliers to Volcafe. They are not asset owners. Coffee is important in their lives, and they bet on it, but they face very hard realities and are sometimes discouraged by the challenges they face. They do not see that economically coffee provides an economic return to the family, and many do not have decision-making power over the income generated by coffee.

Who are they? They are women between the ages of 20 and 50, with children and partners. The older ones have completed primary school and the younger ones have finished the first years of high school. They define themselves primarily as housewives. Some were born in the community, although several are originally from other communities. The younger ones have a heavy caregiving burden as they have young children.

Assets, sources of income and decision making: Younger women have no house or land although their families do (partner and/or parents or in-laws). Older women have their own house but no land in their name. In many cases, their families do not have wet mills or dryers. In other words, they are families of producers with little income or who have lost assets due to debt.

Their families depend on coffee and the sale of farm products from the coffee plantation (bananas, plantains, citrus). In addition to providing family labor, they look for other sources of income to meet their needs during the "lean" months: they cut coffee on other farms, sell bread, beauty products, medicines and gasoline to be able to "defend" themselves. They make decisions about this income and its use, but do not earn enough to be economically self-sufficient. Most of them do not participate in making decisions about the farm, the credit, the sale of coffee or the income generated by the coffee, although they provide labor for the entire production process. It should be emphasized that many of them travel to other farms in their community to harvest coffee. However, their role as employees on other farms was not the focus of the interviews with them.

Community roles and migration. Few participate in organizational spaces. When they do, they do not take on leadership roles, although the younger ones, having studied more, take on tasks with greater responsibility: secretary or treasurer in the rural savings banks. They do not participate in training because: they are not invited, their partners do not let them because they are jealous or because of "what people will say". Others say they have too many tasks or are "not interested" in the topics addressed in the training sessions. The older generations (between 40 and 50 years old) have sons and daughters migrating while their husbands continue to manage the land. Those who have migrated out of the country send money and this has allowed the family to continue with the farm. There are also many young women whose partners migrated to the city and are not involved in coffee (they are police, guards or military). They have decided to stay in the community with their parents or in-laws because they prefer to live in the community or until their husbands improve economically and can "take them" to the city.

Several said they would prefer to learn other activities that would allow them to get ahead economically. Few of them participate in the *cajas rurales* or in training meetings promoted by the company. Those who do participate tend to have less hierarchical relationships at home. All of them are aware of the community initiatives promoted by the company and value them, for example access to electricity, schools, medical centers, road improvements.

Future desires: They yearn to improve their housing, provide more educational opportunities for their children, pay off family debts and cover household medical expenses. Many think that if coffee prices improve they will achieve these goals but do not mention concrete actions to increase their income from coffee. Several are discouraged and, as mentioned earlier, some would prefer to find other work options to get ahead.

Benefits of working with Volcafe: This was the only group that in addition to mentioning the transparency in the weighing and the better price given by the company, also pointed out the support that the company gives to the community as something positive: for example, electricity or support for the school.

Challenges of working with Volcafe: None expressed the existence of challenges in the specific work with the company, which is because most of them do not have a direct link with their technicians and do not always talk with their partners or parents about this issue. They also recognize that they do not usually participate in the training processes organized by the company for multiple reasons:

- a) **The bias of the technicians** means that some are not invited because they are not producers. For example, it was observed that in several cases it is the women, particularly the younger ones, who do the farm accounting. However, they do not always participate in administrative training to learn how to prepare investment plans, which are important for calculating the amount of credit to request from the company.

- b) **Limited autonomy in the use of their time and mobility** due to gender norms: jealousy of their husbands or concern for "what other people will say". One woman said:

"...men are macho because they think that one can't do anything on one's own...they think that women are for the kitchen and that's she should not leave that place...they think: 'if she wants to go harvest coffee, she can go, but that's the only thing she can do'." (HDKQPN4D_8)

- c) **Disenchantment with coffee.** Women generally have little participation in decision-making regarding the income generated from coffee. In the end, for many, the family work in coffee ends up being a burden and they prefer to participate in training on activities that generate personal income (for them) over which they have control. In one community a producer commented:

"Regarding the question your colleague made today... I thought to myself: 'the question she posed, if the money women make is for them, I thought ... 'if that was the case our situation would be very different'. Now I am the owner, I am the owner of my own things and I know what I do and I decide, but at the farm they (husbands) give you a little something and with that one feels satisfied" (HDKQPN4D_8).

Another woman, referring to what topics would be of interest to women in the community told us: "If the training is about coffee, it is a lie that they will go" (HDSGPN4D_1).

Finally, health was an issue emphasized by many in this group: the scarcity and precariousness of both public and private health services means that they must travel on poor roads to the nearest cities to access them. It is not surprising that among their wishes for the future is to have more income to cover the medical expenses they have at home. While this is a structural challenge, it certainly has an impact on the lives of women working in the business chain in the region.

The analysis of the interviews in this group also showed that there are two subgroups that face particular needs and challenges as women in producing families: younger women and women who have had to assume management roles due to the migration of family members (some of them are also young). In the case of the latter, they were part of the family labor force and due to the migration of husbands and sons/daughters or brothers they are assuming responsibility for the management and sale of coffee. The land is not in their name, but they are the ones who must manage it. Many did not show enthusiasm for learning new ways of working with coffee and improving production. In the case of the middle-aged women, coffee is what they have always done and will continue to do, although they depend fundamentally on remittances to: pay debts, fix their houses, cover expenses of other family members who stay with them and subsist in the months without coffee. For some of the younger women, managing the farm is a burden that limits their personal opportunities.

5. Recommendations

Below, based on the characteristics of each type of woman and the benefits and challenges they face in the Volcafe chain in El Paraíso, we suggest strategies that can guide the company's gender programming and give examples of actions to be taken, adapted to the needs of the prioritized types. In this process we use the Reach, Benefit, Empower and Transform (RBET) approach (CGIAR, 2023). We distinguish between actions that the company can perform directly and actions that it can implement in partnership with other entities, e.g., NGOs, government, local organizations. To conclude, we point out the processes that in parallel the company should undertake with its technical team to implement the suggested actions.

Before delving deeper into actions, it is important to consider the following research findings as they inform the suggestions we propose.

- **Women who are more involved in decision making at the household and farm level tend to have more information about the company and coffee.** Sometimes they have more horizontal relationships in their households, in other cases they take great risks and challenge the dominant arrangements because they see coffee as a fundamental source of income for their families. Many (producers or not) are involved in rural financial cooperatives. This finding demonstrates the relevance of working on gender equity issues with men, not only with women.
- Among women producers, **land tenure strengthens women's decision-making power in the household but does not always transform gender relations, although it does allow for slightly less hierarchical arrangements in the household.** Perhaps some of them do not wish to participate in technical training, because they consider that this is the responsibility of men, but it is very likely that they are open to training processes on other topics and that these are the spaces where they can rethink the prevailing gender norms (**gender transformative approaches**).
- For all the groups, **working with new generations is key**, especially with those who are taking over the management of family farms. The role of accompaniment and support of women producers in the area to this new generation will be of great help, not only by sharing technical knowledge but also by learning about life in adverse contexts for women.
- Gender equity work will be more effective if it focuses on the **complementarity of roles** between women and men, since this is how both describe their work on the farm. As mentioned earlier, **involving men**, not just women, in these processes is essential to change "what is assumed to be normal" and will help to ensure that they do not feel threatened or reject the training process.

5.1. Women working for the company in nurseries

They feel good about working with the company and would like to be more integrated. That is why the strategy for working with this group should focus on **encouraging their participation**. The suggested actions are outreach and benefit (RBET approach).

Direct Actions:

- a) The company already has a positive working relationship with them. We suggest **continuing to do what they already do**: a) comply with the minimum wage established by law and b) maintain respectful treatment (time for lunch, access to equipped and clean restrooms, greeting them in the workplace).
- b) In addition to these actions, we suggest **integrating the women in this group in the training processes of the company's team**, for example, in occupational safety issues. Since they work on a daily basis, it is important that, as the company is already doing, they receive salary recognition for the time they dedicate to these training sessions. Another action is to invite them to the celebrations that can be held as a team: March 8 days, end-of-year celebrations or other festivities when they are linked to the company. Finally, if there is a tradition of recognizing employees or company teams on an annual basis, consider recognizing their work (showcase).

Partnership actions:

- a) The company's technicians have emphasized the need to learn more about gender issues in order to improve the work they do. The first step in this process is to hold gender workshops in the company to address relations between men and women in the workplace and outside of it. It will be important to **invite nursery women to gender training**, first because they are the unit with the most women in the team in the area and second, because it can help them both in personal processes and in their interaction with the rest of the team.

5.2. Women suppliers of the company that manage the coffee income but not the farm

They are part of the rural financial cooperatives and are familiar with the weaving and management of coffee, however, for different reasons they delegate the administration and sale of coffee to other members of the family. The strategy for working with them should prioritize **strengthening the participation of those who wish to do so**. The actions suggested are fundamentally of outreach and benefit, although some are aimed at empowerment (RBET approach).

Direct actions:

- a) **Strengthen communication with them.** Invite the couple or the family unit to the meetings of the cajas rurales. It will be very important for the technician to identify the women in this group who are interested in the training process. On the one hand, follow up with the most interested women, invite them to the technical meetings and accompany them more closely. On the other hand, dialogue with the women who are less interested in coffee or in meetings and training on coffee, exploring the reasons for their lack of interest.
- b) **Discuss with them and their families the** determinants of the price of their coffee and actions that improve the price they receive for their coffee. Also address cases in which they consider that they unfairly receive a lower price. They would like to understand better and this can strengthen the relationship and improve quality management for them.

Partnership actions:

- a) Many of them delegate the productive management of the farm to their family members, but some of them would be directly involved in the sale if they were **registered with IHCAFE**. This is one of the biggest barriers identified by this group. The company can, in alliance with other organizations, advocate with IHCAFE so that more women can register with the institution.
- b) **Coordinate trainings** with other organizations (Swisscontact, FUNDER, Solidaridad, Global Brigades). The producers' families should be invited to the trainings (it can be the couple or the sons/daughters and mothers/fathers). It must be ensured that all training processes, regardless of the topic they address, have a gender approach and the use of participatory learning methodologies as a cross-cutting theme. The gender approach should emphasize the complementarity of roles and be sensitive to age differences. They do not know much about the sector outside of sales and their farm. They could benefit from training in the following key topics identified during the fieldwork, although others may emerge along the way:
 - IHCAFE standards;
 - policies that potentially affect them;
 - gender policy;
 - climate change: adaptation and mitigation;
 - Teamwork: joint decision making.

5.3. Women suppliers of the company that manage your farm

They are women who have managed to defy some of the dominant gender norms, manage their properties and sell their coffee directly to the company. Their relationship with the company is close and trusting. The company can consolidate this relationship and support them in achieving the objectives that they have set for their farms, objectives that in turn contribute to the company's goals in the zone (a coffee that is harvested sustainably and that complies with quality standards). It is for this reason that the strategy of working with them should focus on providing an **environment that facilitates their work**. These are actions to maintain and strengthen their empowerment as well as transformation actions linked to technical training processes (RBET).

Direct actions:

- a) **Communicate better and constantly:** a) what cupping parameters the company uses and how it defines them; b) what certification it uses, what requirements are needed to certify its coffee and how it can achieve this; c) to which markets it sells its coffee. In terms of infrastructure, the company can **set up temporary waiting areas during cupping processes:** with chairs, a roof, and access to water and toilets.
- b) **Create a financing program for women:** This would involve making small changes (or adaptations) to the current program and would apply only to loans provided to women producers. For example, women producers have access to credit for inputs and cash at the beginning of the production cycle. We also suggest that the financing program include training for women in accounting and financial planning (part of the Volcafe way), which will allow them to better calculate the credit they require and identify areas where they can save.
- c) Given that they want to increase their production and improve their coffee, the company should **continue to provide technical assistance-Volcafe** way-and increase the number of women producers **certified with CAFE PRACTICE** or other certifications. Perhaps a line of credit could be defined to support women producers in certifying their coffee, while at the same time helping them to comply with the indicators that the company has defined in this respect in the zone and at the national level.
- d) These women have enormous experience and knowledge that can be of help to other women in the area. The company can **involve them in the training and accompaniment of other women**, mainly young women in producer

families, thus expanding technical assistance to women and **strengthening or consolidating the relationship they have with them**. A fund should be contemplated to remunerate their advice or accompaniment.

Partnership actions:

- a) They live in communities where there is no access to credit and see in the cajas rurales the possibility of building a financial alternative to access credit that is not limited to coffee. The cajas rurales can be of great support in obtaining credit if they have an unexpected illness or want to improve their homes or invest in a small family business. One way to support this process is to identify actors with whom the company can partner to **advise and capitalize community-based saving groups** (see experiences and alliances with FUNDER, Brigadas Globales, Solidaridad).

The cajas rurales are also an important space for training on a variety of topics that can generate income (diversifying their economy) and are a key space for providing accompaniment on psychosocial issues that they may not be willing to share in conventional "technical" training spaces, but rather in spaces of coexistence built by the women themselves. Given the long history of the cajas rurales in Honduras, it would be important to identify experiences where they have also been a **space for emotional support among women**.

5.4. Women who are part of the families that supply the enterprise

This is one of the most vulnerable groups and the largest. The company does not have a direct relationship with them, but they are key to Volcafe's coffee supply. Many of them are also taking on new roles and do not always have the knowledge, support and adequate tools to do so. The strategy with them should **encourage and improve their participation in the coffee chain, particularly that of younger women and women with new roles on the farms**. Outreach, benefit and empowerment (RBET) actions are suggested.

Direct actions:

- a) The company should **continue to promote the participation of women** in the rural financial cooperatives and should do so by showing that this space opens up options for women and men beyond coffee credit. If women see this space: as a source of credit for other initiatives; as a space for training, beyond coffee; and as a place to share with other women, it is possible to see a change in their participation in activities organized by the company.
- b) It is essential that technicians **invite partners and family members to technical training processes**. It is very likely that a family approach to work will demand specific training and transform the strategies that they (technicians) use to share their knowledge with producer families. We have noticed openness in the Volcafe team to achieve this.
- c) While the Volcafe Way program includes **training in accounting and financial planning**, the company can build specific modules for young women and teach them together with other family members. Here, **the collaboration of local women producers** will be key to support the "learning by doing" of the new generations.

Partnership actions:

- a) Coordinate **training for producer families** (couple and other family members) in coordination with other organizations. Just like or even more so than women who manage their income but not the farm, these women are unfamiliar with the sector. It must be ensured that all training courses, regardless of the topic they address, have a gender approach as a cross-cutting theme and use participatory learning methodologies as well as an approach that is sensitive to age differences. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the gender approach should be anchored in the notion of complementarity between men and women. Some of the topics suggested for training are:
 - IHCAFE Standards.
 - Policies that potentially affect them.
 - Climate change: adaptation and mitigation.
 - Teamwork: joint decision making.
 - New technologies and their impact on farm management.
- b) **Identify products or activities (undertakings)** that women can carry out in the area and facilitate links with markets/companies to whom they can sell the products or their labor.
- c) Establish partnerships to continue supporting **community programs**, particularly **community health and education services**.

Recommendations to the company's teams and partners.

- a) **Training the team on gender issues**

It is necessary to work with the team on gender issues, starting with basic concepts, going through gender relations within the team and then addressing gender relations in their work with producers and their families. It is important that they know the gender policy of the coffee sector. This training should emphasize the complementarity of roles and age differences.

b) **Strengthen the team's work tools in the area of gender.**

To provide tools in participatory methodologies with a gender and age approach to work with women and men. This process should begin by valuing the knowledge that many team members already have and sharing it. For example, training in informal interviews, field notes, strategies for facilitating workshops.

c) **Propose new models of technical work.**

The Volcafe team recognizes that it would be ideal to have more women on the technical team. At the same time, they mention how difficult it is to do so: they fear for the safety of their female colleagues, as they often travel alone, on motorcycles, on rural roads.

Perhaps the technical work model can be varied and have a technician who travels to the office, when necessary, and a woman collaborator or technician who stays longer in the community, with less frequent outings. The model can be refined over time. Another model is to maintain one technician per area and count on the collaboration of women producers with strong leadership as allies in training and accompaniment processes in the area. In this way, they can become members of the team and receive economic recognition for their work.

d) **Use qualitative methodologies to follow up on the work plan they implement.**

Many of the tools used in the study can help to follow up on the work plan and monitor and evaluate the company's investments in gender equity. In terms of monitoring, it is necessary to analyze: a) what actions have been most effective for women and men in the area; b) what unexpected "effects" they may have had (positive or not); c) what unexpected risks they generated; d) what actions need to be modified and how.

In terms of evaluation, it will be important for the company's technical team to establish constant communication that will make it possible, over time, to identify changes in gender relations and in the conditions of the different women participating in the chain and to ask: What is leading to this change? Or what is holding back change? The study should also identify gaps or issues that need to be addressed to improve programming with them and deepen the understanding of groups or types of women who were not identified in the first phase of the study and who should be better known, especially the women cutters.

They can carry out this process by defining a "control group" that the technicians visit from time to time and with whom they have longer conversations about their work in the area. The interviews or conversations can be guided by the topics used in this methodology. Specific questions can also be proposed based on the priorities or needs of the company at a given time. It will be important, however, to maintain some central themes that facilitate the monitoring and follow-up of the actions undertaken.

6. Conclusions

In this study, we start from the premise that not all women experience the same conditions within value chains. The intersection of different sociocultural factors places women in different and unequal social positions, leading some women to experience greater marginalization or different forms of exclusion within the chains. However, companies tend not to treat women differently. Our objective was to identify the various women participating in the Volcafe chain in El Paraíso and analyze whether there were groups that, because of their social position and role in the chain, were at a disadvantage compared to others. The purpose of this was to help better target the company's investments in gender equity in the area. We proposed to do this through the construction of typologies of women in the company's chain using an intersectional approach.

Both in the focus groups and in the in-depth interviews, women emphasized a great sociocultural homogeneity in their experiences. At the same time, we observed that the interaction between: a) subjective experiences (life histories and personal characteristics); b) age; and c) socioeconomic status, influenced their social positioning and interpretation and management of gender norms. Their social positioning together with the role they play in the chains (both interrelated) have an impact on the decisions they consider they can make about coffee and the place it occupies in their personal and family lives.

The study found that although the women participating in the company's chain did not identify major sociocultural differences among them, they did not all face the same challenges within the chain or respond to them in the same way. It is very likely that both in the focus groups and in the in-depth interviews they wished to "homogenize" their experience or attenuate the differences in view of the expectations of a possible project for "all". However, it is important to reflect on how the factors mentioned above affect their experiences and may lead us to identify other constellations within the typologies initially identified.

In this sense, the intersectional approach was fundamental to understand the variability of experiences among women of the same group or type. It remains to delve into those types that at first glance were subsumed by a broader group. For example, it will be necessary to deepen our understanding of subgroups within the women members of families that sell coffee to the company. In particular, the experiences of young women and women who have had to take on new roles due to migration in their household. Also, women *corteras* who migrate from other areas should be interviewed. In the latter case, it is very likely that one should first go to their communities and then accompany them during the coffee harvest to better understand their experiences and how Volcafe's business practices or its suppliers impact them.

The ethnographic tools we used to understand the women's experience (in-depth interviews and participant observation) were of great help in achieving a comprehensive analysis that took into account not only what the women told us but also the daily reality they live in their homes and on the farms. In this process, factors that they consider irrelevant or that they do not mention at all in the interviews become relevant, showing that, sometimes, what we see happening in the home and on the farm "speaks louder than words".

Participant observation allowed us to distinguish the difference between women who do and do not manage their farms and, together with the in-depth interviews, this tool could help us understand the power relationships established between women in the same extended family (mothers-in-law, daughters-in-law, sisters, daughters), something we were unable to address in this research. These tools can also help us identify practices in the chain that affect women both on the farms and in the company. However, they are time-consuming tools. Future studies should consider the possibility of more time for this activity and the training of technicians in ethnographic methodologies.

Finally, the emphasis we place on interviewing women can also change. The research, for example, prioritized the analysis of the empowerment of different women in the coffee chain using the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index in its version for projects and market inclusion (PRO-WEIA+MI) as a reference (Mapalpit, et al., 2023). Perhaps other companies and partners prioritize women's equality in the chain in their gender strategy¹³. In this case, tools such as the Value Chain Analysis for Development (VC4D) developed by the European Union may be useful (see Lima de Faria et al., 2023).

This study encourages a deeper understanding of the diverse women involved in the supply chain and offers a way to do so. The proposed methodology can contribute to understanding groups that we initially ignored and suggest adapted actions to contribute to the gender equity processes that companies and other partners are already undertaking.

¹³ Understanding equality beyond the number of women participating in the chain.

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